

Dear,

As a Mississippian, you are well aware of all the wonderful things that make our state unique. No matter where you live in the world, there truly is no place like home. In 1979, a small group of native Mississippians living in New York realized just that. Aside from being homesick, they wanted to improve the opinions individuals had about both the city and their home state, and so began the New York/Mississippi picnic. The very first picnic attracted some 500 individuals, and it continues to grow each year.

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the picnic, and it is with great pride and enthusiasm that I invite you to take part in this milestone event. The 2009 picnic will be held June 13, 2009, from noon – 6:00 p.m. in the east meadow of Central Park in Manhattan (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 97<sup>th</sup> Street).

Mississippi's own William Faulkner once said, "To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi." This year's picnic will embrace Faulkner's principle and help our friends from around the country understand and appreciate our down-home, Southern culture and heritage even more.

The theme for this year's picnic is "Celebrate Mississippi," and the event will highlight some of the best of what Mississippi has to offer. Some of our state's most talented artists and chefs will be in attendance. Mississippi blues, country, folk and gospel musicians will perform live. And of course, the New York/Mississippi Picnic wouldn't be complete without tons of Southern fried catfish from Simmons Farm Raised Catfish in Yazoo City and plenty of ice cold McAlister's sweet tea to wash it down.

Marsha and I sincerely hope you will be able to join us on June 13. We will host a brief program at 1:45 p.m., and hope you can attend so we can introduce you to some of your fellow Mississippians and picnic-goers. It will be an excellent opportunity to "spread the good word" about our great state.

We hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Haley Barbour